

## Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease Frequently Asked Questions

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### **What is EHD?**

Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease or EHD, is a viral disease that affects white-tailed deer as well as mule deer, elk, bighorn sheep and pronghorn antelope. Because EHD virus (EHDV) is closely related to another virus that can cause similar disease (Bluetongue), the term Hemorrhagic Disease is often used to describe clinical disease when the specific virus is not known. This disease is often fatal in white-tailed deer in the Midwest.

### **Has EHD occurred in Wisconsin?**

As of September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2012 EHD has been confirmed in Wisconsin in Columbia, Rock, Dane, Sauk and Waukesha counties. Samples were submitted to and analyzed by Michigan State University's Diagnostic Center for Population & Animal Health from deer carcasses in which EHD was suspected. The last known documented outbreak in Wisconsin was in Iowa County in 2002 at which time only 14 deer were identified to have died.

### **Where else does EHD occur in the US?**

Mild infections of hemorrhagic disease occur often in the southeastern United States, but outbreaks have occurred in almost every state. Michigan has been experiencing almost yearly outbreaks since 2006. This year EHD and Bluetongue outbreaks have occurred in Michigan, Illinois, Iowa, Indiana, Missouri, and Nebraska among others.

### **What is Wisconsin's plan for dealing with EHD in our wild deer herds?**

The DNR will seek to monitor the distribution of the disease and the number of deer impacted by the EHD outbreak. Information will be made available on the deer diseases webpage on the Wisconsin DNR website.

### **Now that we have documented it in Wisconsin this year does this mean we will see it again next year?**

This is difficult to predict as it has been 10 years since the last known outbreak has been documented.

### **How is it transmitted and how does it spread?**

EHDV is transmitted to deer through the bite of culicoides also known as biting midges or "no-see-ums". The spread of the virus occurs with the movement of these midges.

### **What are the symptoms in deer?**

Deer can display multiple symptoms depending on how long they are infected. Deer that are infected and have the most severe cases of the disease may be unafraid of humans, salivate excessively, have foam present around the nose (sometimes with blood), appear weak but in good body condition and may appear to have swollen areas of their body (typically areas of the head and neck). Deer may also be found in or near water as they can develop very high fevers and as a result drink heavily or lie in the water to cool their bodies. In some instances deer may have erosions or ulcerations in their mouth and detachment of the wall of their hoof.

### **What should I do if I observe a deer that appears sick or is already dead?**

Landowners and other persons who observe a deer that appears sick, or is displaying clinical signs for EHD, or is found dead are encouraged to contact the department quickly.

To report a sick deer or deer carcass observation please call the DNR's call center toll free at 1(888)-WDNR INFO (1-888-936-7463), e-mail us at [DNRInfo@wisconsin.gov](mailto:DNRInfo@wisconsin.gov), or chat with us on-line at <http://dnr.wi.gov/contact>. Staff are available 7 days a week from 7 am – 10 pm. (Between the hours of 8 – 4:30, Monday – Friday, please direct the caller to the wildlife biologist for the county that the dead deer are

located.) Please be prepared to provide details about the condition of the deer and the exact location where the deer was observed.

**Will all sick/dead deer be tested?**

No. Initially, lung samples will be collected from deer that are suspected to have died from EHD and death has occurred within 24 hours. However, once test results indicate EHD, no additional samples will be collected from deer from that county. It is very important that reports of dead or sick deer continue to be provided to the Wisconsin DNR so that they are entered into the agency's Wildlife Health Database regardless of whether or not a site visit is conducted or a sample is collected. This will allow the DNR to track the geographic distribution of the disease and the number of deer impacted.

**How long will it take to get test results back if a sample has been collected from an animal?**

It will take approximately 1-2 weeks to get test results back once samples have been collected from a deer that has been determined to have died within the last 24 hours.

**How long does an outbreak last?**

Outbreaks typically last with the life of the midges (late July through October or November). Freezing temperatures drastically reduce midge population activity and the spread of the disease.

**What is the risk to the deer herd? Is there reason to be concerned about the disease?**

Death due to EHD outbreaks can range from below 25% of the population in a localized area to 50% or more. However, to date there have been no reports of EHD being a significant factor in long term population decline.

**How long after being bitten will a deer get sick? Will every deer bitten die?**

A deer can start showing signs of disease approximately seven days following infection. Once a deer starts showing clinical signs though, it can die in a matter of hours to days. Not every deer that is bitten will become infected and not every infected deer will die.

**Does winter increase the chances of reoccurrence of an outbreak?**

No-see-ums overwinter as larvae and adult midges are not expected to survive, even with a mild winter. It is not clear how the virus persists through winters when midges are not active.

**What is the risk of carcasses on the landscape?**

There is no risk of leaving the carcasses of deer that potentially died from EHD on the landscape. The disease is not transmitted through carcasses or the environment after decomposition. The DNR will not remove or dispose of deer carcasses tested for EHD, suspected to have died from EHD, or for which no known cause of death can be determined.

**Does EHD pose a health risk to humans?**

EHD viruses do not infect humans. There is no known occurrence of a human contracting this virus from either the midges that transmit the virus to deer or from eating venison from an EHD infected deer.

**Can EHD be transmitted to livestock or domestic pets?**

For further information and advice on EHD in livestock or domestic pets, contact your veterinarian or the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection at 608-224-4872 or [datcpanimals@wi.gov](mailto:datcpanimals@wi.gov).

**Will the deer feeding and baiting regulations change?**

No. While EHD transmission is not attributed to environmental transmission through baiting and feeding state law already requires a baiting and feeding prohibition for the entire southern portion of the state due to Chronic Wasting Disease.

**Will the planned deer seasons for this fall change?**

No, the deer seasons this fall will not be changed due to EHD.